

## Maundy Thursday Service

Reflections on second reading:

John 15:1-5, 8-9, 16-17 and aboriginal reading on people loving the soil.

If you are not an arborist, it may seem like cruel and inhumane treatment. Trimming and pruning a tree, I mean. It seems to me, at least (the non-arborist) that the fresh growth every year should be celebrated, and the new branches should gallop into fullness unimpeded.

Yet leave a tree to its own devices and nothing good will come. Fruit trees will become leafy trees that have no energy left to form blossoms and ultimately develop fruit. Shade trees are so eager to reach into the sky that they forget to bush out and fill in. Grape vines become sparse or gnarled if they are not trimmed and managed effectively.

It is that way for humans. Problems arise when we fail to trim our toe nails or cut the split ends of the hairs in our hair. Trimming and pruning is not an attack on something else; it is a way to manage growth. Sometimes we need such trimming when it comes to managing our activity calendars, or developing and deepening our thoughts and ideas.

Tonight we gather, just when we might think we are getting used to this idea of Jesus Christ, and maybe a little closer to knowing what this faith thing is all about.

And just as we God think we have it all together, we come to this service tonight, a night of mystery and also a night of betrayal, a night of comradeship and also a night of enmity, a night of finality and also a night of new beginnings.

Let us not worry that tonight we are about to receive all of the answers to our journey of faith, but let us also not worry about having all of the right questions to ask. Maybe just being here is enough, as it was for most of the disciples who gathered with Jesus on that final evening.

Yes, maybe just being here is enough. And so we need not worry where we need to be trimmed and shaped – let God's spirit shape and mould us for God's good.

Reflection on third readings: John 14:25-29 and also Lakota teaching on no wilderness.

There are times when it is okay to go away, maybe even welcome.

In the ancient world the idea of a scapegoat was more than a concept – a real goat would be named to carry with it the sins and ills of a community, as it would be set free beyond the city walls in order to take away what was not welcomed among the people.

Such an action is based on a common understanding that what is safe for us is that which we know, and anything beyond our community and our points of contact is foreign, barren wilderness.

For the Lakota, there was no wilderness, for all was part of the goodness of God's creation.

Have you ever embarked on a journey – a holiday, a new job, moved to a new community, left home to go to school or had a child or grandchild leave home and venture into the world? And were there features of that event that brought uncertainty, fear, upset, turmoil to you?

And what was the end result?

I suspect in many cases less upsetting than we imagined.

What we should fear is not moments when we move on and experience new things – we should fear that we have lost the ability to grow and learn from those experiences. Tonight is a night not just of sorrow and pain – it is a night about hope and new understanding.

It prepares us for tomorrow when we will learn we should not be devastated by whatever we may face in life.

And that makes any day worthy of the name "Good"

## Reflections on 4<sup>th</sup> readings

(Reading on rest, and aboriginal reading on flash of firefly and breath of buffalo in winter)

What is the most stimulating and fleeting image you can think of? If you have stood outside a trailer in the bush, as I have, the flash of the firefly in the darkest part of night seems so immediate, so powerful, so fleeting. And I can only image the breath of the buffalo in winter is the same. After all, I have seen cattle in the field breathing in winter. It is as if you could catch their breath were you closer.

What amazed me as a child, and I must admit still amazes me when I can find them in a local store, are sparklers burning after dark. Take the sparkley, burning end and make patterns in the air, and it is as if the air has been inscribed with your patterned activity. Yet just as quickly the designs and lights, elusively lit before us, are never to be seen again in that manner. A new sparkler and a new waving will create similar, but still different patterns.

The events of Maundy Thursday seem embedded on our minds, and in history, but they were a fleeting part of Jesus' life. Many did not know all that was taking place until long after that evening. The story of that night is as powerful, and as fleeting, as my sparkler dancing in the night sky.

Much of life is like that. We miss, or can miss, important events and potentially life-changing moments if we are not prepared for them. And so tonight we should ask more than: "What was the impact of that first Maundy Thursday?" but rather ask ourselves: "Are we open to being led by God in new ways in the week ahead? The year ahead? In the days to come?"

Are we open to being led by God? If we are, then let us gather as God's people, and when we gather around these tables, we will be open to how God expects us to live and to be with one another.